1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

## Chapter XV

## Birth and Childhood

### *A. Hill Marias*

No Marias are unaware of the causal connexion between intercourse and pregnancy, and all women know when they miss their first menstruation that they are probably starting to bear a child. Pregnancy among Hill Marias is attended by no taboo either for man or wife, so far as I could ascertain, and the wife continues performing her ordinary routine work right up to the last day of her pregnancy. Sexual intercourse, however, ceases as soon as pregnancy is known to have begun.

During ordinary menstruation, as we have seen in Chapter VI, the wife, like all young women, is secluded for five or six days either in the communal menstruation hut, or in the *kala* or menstruation room or the separate menstruation hut of the house. The menstruation huts, whether communal or private, are known as *pedawo'gha'i*, or (in the south of the Abujhmar hills) as *dola-lon*, or (in the extreme north) as *kurma-lon*. The term *pedawo'gha'i* is applied also sometimes to the *kala* room in the houses. These huts and rooms have been described already on pages 104-6. The Hill Marias say that their clan-god and their Departed would be angry if they gave up their immemorial custom of secluding their women during menstruation, and that no man should see a woman's face at such a time; we have seen that they often guard against the magic of women in this condition by placing castor oil plants and seeds on the roof of the hut when it is occupied. The men do not seem to have any clear idea of what happens to a woman at such times; they only know and say that she 'has gone *pedawo'gha'i*'. There is no ceremony of any kind at a girl's first menstruation, or during pregnancy. Though children are generally born in the menstruation room or hut, and for some time after birth the mother has to live there, subject to the same prohibitions as during menstruation, yet during her nine months she is free from the ordinary taboos to which she is subject during menstruation; that is to say, she is free to visit her husband in the fields and to cook his food for him, in fact to do all her ordinary household and field or market tasks. But it is taboo for a pregnant woman to pick or break anything growing. There may possibly be certain prohibitions which I did not discover,

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



841 or fowls. She must not take grain from the bins or approach the Hearth of the Departed. Except at the menarche, however, she may fetch wood and leaves which may be used by other members of the household; she may fish so long as it is not in a pond; she may even dance so long as it is not at a Penkarsita and she does not touch any man.

When I was taking photographs in Maria villages I frequently came up against these taboos. At Mokhpal I was unable to photograph a girl with strikingly Mongolian features because she was in her period—the people seemed genuinely afraid that the menstrual exhalations would break the lens. At Tikanpal, where I wanted to stage a group of girls making leaf-cups, I was not permitted to do so because one of them was in her period and must not sit on a mat. At Doriras a married girl refused to be photographed standing in front of the girls' dormitory because menstruating women were accustomed to sleep there.

During a wife's period a husband is subject to the laws of a 'little couvade'. No one will eat from his hands; no one will accept tobacco from his pouch. He must not cook or fetch water. He too must not go to the grain bins or approach the symbols of the Departed. He may go to a shrine, but he must not enter it; he may cut his clearing, but he must not fire it or sow seed. He may not hunt, carry a *kawar*-pole, climb a tree, cut grass or reap a crop. If he is a Perma or Gaita he may not perform any religious rite, and if he is a Gunia he cannot divine the cause of sickness.

● 842 It is generally believed by the Marias, as by the rest of India, that a woman is most likely to conceive if she has intercourse on the day she has her ceremonial bath at the close of the period.

886 As by other aboriginals the climacteric is accepted by the Marias as a matter of course. 'As it appears, so it disappears.' If an elderly woman or her husband dreams of a dried-up tank or stream, it means that this crisis is approaching.

## V

843 Pregnancy is diagnosed by the cessation of the menses, vomiting, swelling of the breasts and a darkening of the nipples. 'The face dries a little.' It is generally supposed that a boy is more exacting and makes the mother look fragile and exhausted, while a girl keeps her fresh and well.

843 177 During pregnancy, Bison-born Maria taboos are not exacting and my suspicion is that originally they were as few and as casual as those of the Hill Maria, and that any elaboration is due to the influence of the local Hindus who, on the whole, pay more attention to the pregnancy than to the menstrual taboos. In other words,

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

*CHAPTER FOUR*

# THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

## I. Pregnancy and Birth

[524] *Burha te jäwa unddna bedur gatta te mak dāyna. It drinks gruel from a gourd, but hides among the bamboos.* A baby, drinking at the breast and swinging in a bamboo basket.—Muria riddle

•842 PREGNANCY so dreaded in the ghotul is desired at home. Sterility does not seem to be very common—out of the 2000 cases studied only 150 were childless—but a married couple without children are always miserable.

The Muria attribute sterility to various causes. One is a purely physical one. 'I have no child', said the Chalki of Korenda, 'though I go to my wife every day. There may be plenty of rain, but unless there is warmth in the ground to help the seed to grow, there is no harvest.' A former Sirdar of Pupgaon attributed his sterility to the fact that 'perhaps I do not know how to copulate properly'. Wives sometimes say their childlessness is because their husbands have 'wasted all their seed by scattering it in the ghotul fields'.

842 789 Others give a supernatural reason. At a marriage a witch may slip some evil magic into the bride's dress or hair when she puts tika on her forehead. A jealous motiari whose 'husband' has been married to another girl may perform spells to stop her supplanter from realizing the fullest joys of marriage. The Constable of Modenar said that Mayakaka Deo or Kondi Deo was the cause of the trouble. 'He stopped my wife having a child for four years. Then we promised him a pig, a goat and five chickens and a child was born.'

842 578 [586] Sterility is always a cause of quarrels and disagreements in the home. Husband and wife each accuse the other of being at fault. A former Sirdar of Sodma said, 'We went to each other for seven years till we were weary, and still there was no child; every time my wife's period began, she abused me saying, "Are you a man? Haven't you any strength?" And I used to feel miserable and ashamed.' On the other hand, out of the 2000 marriages examined, none of the few divorces were attributed to this cause.

843 A girl is born in nine months, a boy in ten. 'A girl takes a great deal out of the mother.' Yet women love suffering—*godan* (tattooing), *chodan* (intercourse), and *paidan* (child-bearing). But Muria men seem to do all they can to spare the mother. During pregnancy intercourse must cease after the fifth month. Intercourse is not generally resumed for a year after child-birth, for 'if you sow seed in wet ground, a harvest is certain' and it is important to space confinements properly. After a year, 'when the wife feels an itching for it, she herself goes to lie with her husband'. But in some places, in Alor and Berma for example, I was told that intercourse began again after six months, and at Kabonga that 'a man goes to his wife when their child first smiles'. But most Muria regard a woman as physically unattractive during the puerperium. 'Her breasts and privates are *gilgila*: who would care for them? But once the child can walk, the mother is again lovely in our eyes.'

843 844 In Masora I was given a catalogue of the various kinds of birth and it is interesting to note that these are largely based on the spacing of confinements. The Sambhar Birth occurs after a space of three years and the child is strong and healthy. The Tiger Birth also comes after three years to a woman of

## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

841 sleeps at home for a day, still subject to most of her taboos. On the following
515 day she bathes again and anoints herself, or allows her mother or sister to anoint her. In most villages she is free after the second bath. She may go again to the fields and in the evening to the ghotul. In Binjhli, however, and in a few other villages, I have found the rule that she must have three baths: the Deer Bath on the fifth day after the beginning of her period, the Lizard Bath on the sixth and the Hare Bath on the seventh. Only on the evening of the seventh day may the girl return to the ghotul. This is partly a hygienic measure—the Muria consider that a girl who finishes her bathing on her fourth day is 'as dirty as a Hindu' but one who takes three baths is 'white as a Raja'—partly a measure of birth control. The Muria
• [842] share the universal Indian belief that conception is most likely to occur on the day the menstrual flow ceases.[1] This is commonly on the fourth day, and so by segregating the motiari for the dangerous period the Binjhli chelik consider that the risk of pregnancy is lessened. Even so, when a girl returns to the ghotul after her menses, she warns the boy with whom she is sleeping: 'I have just bathed my head; if there is a baby, it will be yours: will you be responsible for it?' In Binjhli the chelik told us that the girls make their
[833] lovers promise to practise *coitus interruptus* on this day, and it is the duty of the Belosa to warn the girls about it. In Markabera, however, the girls returned to the ghotul directly their flow stopped, and no special precautions were observed.

841 When the girl returns to the ghotul after her period the boys rag her. 'O
522 Tiloka, the bank was broken, the water was pouring out like a river, we were tired of mending it. But now all the water has run out and the field is dry.' Or sometimes the boys say, 'Your pot had a hole in it, but today you mended it with lac'. And again, 'Who dug the hole and let the water out?' And that evening they pretend she is still unclean and cry, '*Chi chi chi*; don't touch me!' And they may say to her special chelik, 'What a lucky man you are: your rice has ripened quickly: tonight you can cut the crop'. But it is said that after the first menstruation, in those ghotul where there are ghotul mates, the chelik treats his girl with special tenderness. 'There is no end to his love for her; he doesn't let her sleep all night.' In a mysterious way, his motiari has become a woman; she is different, mature, and doubly precious.

As we would expect, the girls often suffer from dreams at this time. In
841 Padbera they said that the Yer Kanyang who lives in the river feeds on the
787 blood of washed-out menstrual cloths. This naiad is very lonely with no one to keep her company; so she visits the motiari in the menstruation hut and plays with them in their dreams. Because these girls dance with her all night, they are slack and weary during the day. The girls at Padbera can tell when they are about to begin their periods because they dream of the Yer Kanyang and see the river. The river-dream is everywhere prophetic of the period, especially if husband and wife or chelik and his ghotul mate dream of a river in flood. This is an important dream, for it enables the women who are favoured with it to beware of going to tabooed places where their period might begin unexpectedly. If girls dream of fire or of flying up into the sky, it is a warning that they will suffer from irregular menstruation. The end of the period is heralded by a dream of a dried-up pond.

841 Breach of the menstruation rules is very serious. The importance attached
776 to them may be seen by the interesting and curious case of the goddess Pendrawandin. This goddess, whose story is given on page 178, was originally

[1] Cf. J. J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (London, 1930), Vol. II, p. 368

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

a *jodidār* ghotul, a pregnancy scandal caused the chelik and motiari to adopt the other rule of partnership. Twenty years ago, Masora was a *jodidār* ghotul; today its members insist on change. I believe that originally all over the ghotul area the dormitories were of the older type; then in order to avoid the scandals and elopements that naturally arose from such intense and lasting attachments, and as a result of the belief that conception was less likely when the cycle of coitus was frequently broken, the rules were changed.

The ghotul, therefore, gives no support to those who believe in what Westermarck called the 'hypothesis of primitive promiscuity'. Promiscuity is the last thing permitted in the *jodidār* ghotul. It might even be argued that it is the result of culture-contact, for the ghotul in the neighbourhood of towns and schools, or along the roads, are generally of the modern, promiscuous, type.

This gradual change from one tradition to another probably accounts for the very haphazard distribution of the two types at the present time. The old tradition persists in the neighbourhood of the Abujhmar and among the Jhoria; elsewhere there is no rule. Here and there throughout the whole area, *jodidār* ghotul survive in the midst of dormitories which, as the result of scandal or example, have changed their rules. In the Kongur Pargana, for example, More Berma, Kanhargaon and Gorma are ghotul of the old type surrounded by others, as are Chimri and Morenga in the Bangoli Pargana. At the present time, the newer type of ghotul seems to be in the majority; out of the 2000 married men examined, 720 had grown up in *jodidār* dormitories, and 1280 in the others, while out of 347 dormitories of which I have information on this point 269 have adopted the new rules, 78 retaining the older customs.

### II

In the *jodidār* ghotul, the pairing-off of chelik and motiari in a more or less permanent relationship, only to be dissolved by the marriage or death of one partner, is taken very seriously. In most villages there is a custom of the ghotul marriage, which is celebrated after the children have attained ghotul maturity and received their titles. In Metawand the chelik gave me a detailed description of the ceremony.

The members of the ghotul are allotted their various parts in the marriage. First of all, the boy's 'parents' go to the girl's 'parents' for the betrothal ceremony, carrying two leaf-pipes to represent bottles of liquor. The girl's parents say—in strict accordance with tradition—'Why have you come, samdhi?' 'O there's nothing special, we were going this way and looked in for a few moments.' 'No, no, there must be some reason.' 'Well, we did hear that a flower had blossomed in your house; we would pick it to adorn our hair.' 'Ah, how truly they say that a dog is fed many years only to be taken by a panther in the end, and a daughter is cherished only to be carried off by the samdhi.' There follows the usual dispute about the bride-price and, when that is agreed, the two parties sit together and smoke.

The following day comes the 'marriage'. Ashes are used instead of haldi. A little booth is made in the ghotul court. The marriage ritual is briefly recapitulated. Water is poured from the roof over the two children. Eager hands catch them and shut them up in an inner room. The bride screams, 'Open the door, let me out'. The others, shouting with laughter, at last let them go. That night the two sleep together, and will probably continue to do so until one of them is married.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942).1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria



together, and beat the boy, telling him that the girl was no longer his, and that such meetings would bring scandal upon them all. Behind those slaps how much one can see of parental exasperation over a long and troublesome intrigue, almost certainly parental envy of a son entranced by love, and the usual Muria dread of adultery—a very genuine sentiment.

Boy and girl ran away—I can see their quick Muria nature dissolved in tears and anger—and returned to the ghotul for the feast that sealed their separation. Munga had to massage every chelik after supper as a farewell rite, but then, when all was quiet, they crept together out of the ghotul to the woods. That night—it was 20 May 1932—they climbed onto the great branch of a mango tree, tied and adjusted ropes, and facing one another fell to death. When they were found, Chaitu had his hand upon his motiari's shoulder.

V

Although outwardly both types of ghotul are the same and often only the most careful investigation can distinguish them, the customs and atmosphere of the modern type are entirely distinct. Here everything is arranged to prevent long-drawn intense attachments, to eliminate jealousy and possessiveness, to deepen the sense of communal property and action. No chelik may regard a motiari as 'his'. There is no ghotul marriage, there are no ghotul partners. 'Everyone belongs to everyone else' in the very spirit of *Brave New World*. A chelik and motiari may sleep together for three nights; after that they are warned; if they persist they are punished. If a boy shows any signs of possessiveness for a particular girl, if his face falls when he sees her making love to someone else, if he gets annoyed at her sleeping with another chelik, should he be offended if she refuses to massage him and goes to someone else, he is forcibly reminded by his fellows that she is not his wife, he has no *haq* or right over her, she is the *māl* or property of the whole ghotul, and if he looks like that he will be punished.

This type of ghotul is sometimes called the *mundi-badalna* because in it you change from girl to girl just as you change your rings from finger to finger.

How is it that this type of ghotul has so widely displaced the classical *jodidār* dormitory? Why is the process of change from one type to the other continuing today? There are many reasons.

In the Benur Pargana and at Koilibera I heard the phrase 'so that they will not be ruined by love'. This is certainly a genuine consideration. Too much love before marriage will mean too little after it. Sexual romance is not the best preparation for a life-long union. A strong and lasting attachment to a girl in the pre-nuptial period may lead to an elopement and an irregular marriage. Such a marriage disturbs the serenity of the home—which ultimately depends on the parents; it destroys the old alliances of families and prevents the repayment of ancient debts; it often turns out unsuccessful. In villages where several such elopements have occurred within a short time, the rules of the ghotul have been changed.

The modern rules are also intended as a contraceptive measure. The Muria believe that conception only occurs when the male and female remain together for a long period and enjoy an uninterrupted series of acts of coition with no divergence of interest. Both psychological and physical concentration in fidelity to a single partner is required for pregnancy.

A former Chalan of Golawand, for example, described how he consistently changed his ghotul partners and never made anyone pregnant; but two friends of his in the same ghotul slept every day with the same girls and impregnated

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria



X 853
836
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them both. The Gaita at Kollibera said that a chelik could have congress three times a night and it would do no harm, but if he went to the same girl more than three days running he would fall ill and she might conceive.

The modern type of ghotul breaks up the coital sequence and is thus supposed to lessen the danger of conception. Statistics, however, show that this is not so. Among 2000 men, 80 made motiari pregnant during their ghotul period; of these 25 or 1 in 28·8 belonged to *jodidār* ghotul, and 55 or 1 in 23·2 to the modern type.

[531]

FIG. 61. Carving on the door of a private house at Bandopal
*Slightly enlarged*

X 883
836

A more genuine reason for the prevalence of the newer rules is the Muria temperament which is fundamentally hostile to individualism, to exclusiveness, and to any kind of 'possessiveness'. The Muria believe that if everyone belongs to everyone else in the ghotul there will be no room for jealousy. I am not at the moment thinking whether this is true or not, but it is certainly what

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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833 partner; but here, so far from being thought improper, it is not unknown for a girl to attract a chicken-hearted chelik in this way.

Woman is indeed regarded as insatiable. 'Woman is earth; man cannot plough her.' The proverb means that as a single plough cannot break up the universal earth, so no man can really satisfy a woman. Here we have the opposite view to that commonly held in Europe, that sex is the man's privilege and the woman's duty; in aboriginal India, sex is the man's duty and the woman's right. It is her compensation for the embarrassments of menstruation and the pains of child-bearing. She has no more powerful means of dominating and subjugating the male.

It is difficult to say what a Muria regards as the normal frequency of intercourse. Among adults it is often said that a Muria woman insists on a daily connexion until the first child is born; after that twice a week is enough.' A wife is very passionate until she gets a child, but then the child takes her passion and her strength away.' Yet when a husband is more ardent it gives great satisfaction to his partner. 'If he goes to her three times during the night she beams with happiness and tells her friends, "I saw no sleep tonight. He gave it all to me. His life was in me all night".'

[595] This tradition imposes a great strain on the polygamous husband and may explain why multiple marriage is so rare. A former Chalki of Bayanar had two wives. 'We never quarrelled so long as I went daily to both. I didn't mind for I was strong enough. After all, it is only your land, and every man tills as much as he can. All you need is a pair of strong bullocks and a plough.'

A childless couple are often driven to excess in a vain attempt to stir the 833 mysterious forces that cause conception. A Daroga of More Berma told me, ●842 'My penis has been worn out by seven years' hard work, just as a bit of cloth is torn to bits after months of heavy wear, but still I cannot get a child'. And a man at Alor said, 'You may work night and day, but unless God fills the womb with hair, it is all of no avail'.

X883 In the ghotul sexual practice varies. In places where there has recently been a pregnancy, the leaders insist on restraint as a contraceptive measure, 833 and sometimes demand that their permission be taken before indulgence. But this is emergency legislation, and the ghotul soon slips back into freer ways. In the stricter ghotul, the chelik and motiari do not have congress more than two or three times a week. At Esalnar, they claimed that they did not exceed once a week—for here they were much concerned to prevent conception.

But elsewhere I have heard the chelik laugh at such moderation. 'The penis is the *datun* (toilet-twig) of the vagina and should clean it every day.' In Binjhli, where chelik and motiari only sleep together once a week, on Fridays, they said that they had intercourse outside the ghotul every day, and at least three times on Fridays.

In most ghotul, the motiari expects her chelik to approach her sexually every day. 'If the boy does nothing, then the following evening when she is combing his hair she says, "Was it a day or a night yesterday? You forgot it was night. Why were you lying beside me like a corpse?" The boy feels very ashamed and says that he had a bad head or was very tired after working in the fields. "But I'll tire you out tonight", he says.'

'A night without intercourse', said a motiari at Chandabera, 'seems twelve years long.'

834 The Muria tradition, which is always wise and sane in sexual matters, interrupts the routine with many holidays. The regular monthly rest during the catamenial period of wife or motiari is a boon alike to husband and chelik. During pregnancy and after it there is a fairly long period of abstinence. During

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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*CHAPTER SEVENTEEN*

# THE PROBLEM OF GHOTUL INFERTILITY

RECENT controversies about the sex life of primitive peoples, which have centred mainly on such questions as the extent of their ignorance of physiological paternity and the pre-marital licence they permit, have tended to obscure the equally interesting and important problem of infertile pre-marital promiscuity.

This problem, which arises in an acute form among the Muria, has often puzzled anthropologists. They have observed that many societies allow the unmarried complete freedom of sexual opportunity, that 'illegitimate' births are rare, but that after marriage the women generally prove remarkably fertile. It is to writers on the Pacific area that we are indebted for a clear statement of this problem. African observers have tried to find some solution in the contraceptive practices and restraints of their peoples and have generally, I think, evaded the main issue.[1] In India there is little evidence of value to illustrate the sex life of its aboriginals. It is astonishing that none of the writers on the village dormitories or men's houses throughout the world have seriously tackled a question so fundamental to any discussion of the institutions they have described.

One of the first to draw attention to the question was Seligman, who wrote in 1910 that a puzzling feature of the licence undoubtedly permitted throughout the Massim area of British New Guinea was the very small number of illegitimate births which took place.

> Wherever the confidence of the natives was gained it was admitted that abortion was induced, but the most careful inquiries failed to produce evidence that the practice was as frequent as might be expected considering the prevailing liberty. In fact, with every *a priori* reason for expecting abortion to be commonly produced I came to the conclusion that in fact it was a somewhat infrequent event.[1]

Rivers noticed the same thing among the Eddystone Islanders.

> The very free relations existing before marriage might have been expected to lead to the birth of many children and to the existence of definite regulations for assigning such children to their proper place in society. Such births seemed, however, to be extremely rare, and in the whole of the pedigrees collected by us only one such case was given, and that many generations ago.[2]

Writing in *Oceania* on the culture of the people of Wogeo, one of the New Guinea islands, Hogbin says that,

> Single girls do sometimes have children, but illegitimacy is not nearly so common as one might have expected. Just why this is so it is impossible to say. I observed one fact that bears directly upon the problem, namely that it is extremely rare for women to have children until they are, I judge, more than twenty-one years of age, by which time most of them are safely married. I have noticed that even when a girl is married directly after her first menstruation, which does not

[1] C. G. Seligman, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 500.
[2] W. H. R. Rivers, *Psychology and Ethnology* (London, 1926), p. 76.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria



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regularly take place until almost certainly after the seventeenth year, it is most unusual for her to have a child for several years.[1]

Barton notes that in the Ifugao *agamang* 'conception results less frequently than one would expect. The surprising intensity of the sex life of the *agamang* period seems to create physiological conditions unfavourable to conception: possibly the excessive intercourse keeps the female organs in a state of hyperemia'.[2]

The classical statement of the problem is by Malinowski. In his great study of the Trobriand Islanders—who have in their *bukumatula* an institution for pre-marital congress not wholly unlike the ghotul—he says,

> Since there is so much sexual freedom, must there not be a great number of children born out of wedlock? If this is not so, what means of prevention do the natives possess?
>
> As to the first question, it is very remarkable to note that illegitimate children are rare. The girls seem to remain sterile throughout their period of licence, which begins when they are small children and continues till they marry; when they are married they conceive and breed, sometimes quite prolifically. I express myself cautiously about the number of illegitimate children, for in most cases there are special difficulties even in ascertaining the fact... so that only an approximate estimate can be made even in a community with which one is very well acquainted.
>
> I was able to find roughly a dozen illegitimate children recorded genealogically in the Trobriands, or about one per cent.[3]

Malinowski goes on to say that contraceptive methods are completely unknown in the Trobriands. Two years later Rentoul, in a communication to *Man*, declared that the Trobriand women were 'specially endowed or gifted with ejaculatory powers, which may be called upon after an act of coition to expel the male seed'.[4] Though Malinowski poured scorn on Rentoul's suggestion, describing it as 'one of the typical myths which circulate among the semi-educated white residents', Himes is not prepared to reject it altogether.

> What is undoubtedly the same technique, seminal expulsion by violent bodily movements, is reported as used by Australian natives. Therefore its occasional use by some Trobriand women is a possibility. Other circumstances being equal, a positive declaration of use seems more credible than a denial by natives in conversation with an anthropologist.[5]

Yet even if some of the Trobriand women do practise this means of contraception, as some of them undoubtedly limit the number of their offspring by abortion, the problem still remains—the extreme disparity between the extent of the sexual licence allowed and what is usually regarded as its inevitable sequence. Malinowski says again,

> Can there be any physiological law which makes conception less likely when women begin their sexual life young, lead it indefatigably, and mix their lovers freely? This, of course, cannot be answered here,

[1] H. I. Hogbin, 'The Native Culture of Wogeo', *Oceania*, Vol. V (1935), pp. 320f.
[2] R. F. Barton, *Philippine Pagans* (London, 1938), p. 11.
[3] B. Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages*, third edition (London, 1932), pp. 166ff.
[4] A. C. Rentoul, 'Physiological Paternity and the Trobrianders', *Man*, Vol. XXXI (1931), p. 153.
[5] N. E. Himes, *Medical History of Contraception* (London, 1936), p. 33.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria



as it is a purely biological question; but some such solution of the difficulty seems to me the only one, unless I have missed some very important ethnological clue.[1]

The problem thus posed presents itself in a peculiarly acute form when we consider conditions of life in the ghotul. For here, boys and girls—in spite of various checks and disciplines—cohabit from the period of their first tentative experiments, through full sexual maturity, for five to eight years until their freedom is ended by marriage. Yet here too pregnancies are comparatively rare and, though various contraceptive means are practised, few of them have physiological properties.

The incidence of pregnancy, however, is higher than that discovered by Malinowski in the Trobriands. Out of 2000 cases, 80 men admitted to having made their ghotul partners pregnant, and in the 220 ghotul examined, I found a history of 327 pregnant girls.

I believe that these figures are reasonably accurate. Although there is a strict rule against any member of the ghotul revealing even to the elders of the tribe, let alone to an inquisitive outsider, the fact that a motiari is pregnant at the moment, this reticence is no check on the loquacity of older men about matters long since past. As we shall see, there is no moral or social stigma attaching to pre-marital pregnancy; it is rather a matter of business, a complicated financial transaction. Everyone in the ghotul hushes it up rather as one might hush up a friend's mistakes or follies, anxious only to get him off. But once it is all over, the bills paid, the girl married, the child accepted as a full member of its legal father's family and clan, the real father allows himself the pleasures of retrospection; he recalls the potency of former days and finds it not ungratifying to remember what a lad he was.

Eighty pregnancies out of 2000 is 4 per cent, much more than Malinowski's figure, astonishingly more than Rivers'—and this in spite of the fact that the Muria admit to contraceptive practices that are denied in the Trobriand and Eddystone Islands. It is possible that a statistical, instead of a genealogical, inquiry would have yielded higher figures, at least in the Eddystone Islands. The genealogical method is not the best way to discover 'illegitimate' births among primitive people, for the whole trend of primitive society is to legitimatise births wherever possible.

Yet although the older Muria are not unwilling to admit the scandals of long ago, it is regarded as vitally important for a Muria girl to avoid conception. Pre-nuptial intercourse is socially recognised, and even tacitly approved, yet pre-nuptial pregnancy is at the moment of its occurrence a major social disaster, the chief anxiety of ghotul life, the one cloud upon its dreamland. It brings disgrace upon the ghotul, it endangers the girl's normal marriage prospects, it imposes a heavy financial burden upon the boy's parents and it casts a momentary shadow over the whole village. It is sometimes believed that a youth who has 'wasted his seed'[2] in making a motiari pregnant will be sterile later in life. On joining the ghotul the little chelik and motiari are solemnly warned both by their parents and by the ghotul leaders of the risks of pregnancy and are told how to avoid it.

For the Muria have a vivid appreciation of the fact of physiological paternity. The answer to the riddle 'Out of water, bones' is 'Semen and a child'.

[1] Malinowski, op. cit., p. 168.

[2] The expression used for a girl is *was bigad gaya*, 'her nerve is broken', if she conceives out of due time.

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842 Conception, they say, is due to 'the conflict of two waters'. 'It is a kind of urine that makes a baby.' 'The child is formed in the womb just like the chicken in the egg, first the white, then the yolk, then the bones and flesh, and at last the life.' But some Muria say that it is not possible to have any exact knowledge about the conception of a child. 'It is not as though we were just tying up a bundle and could say exactly what we had put inside it.'

But the place of the father, the male, in the procreative process is fully recognized in folk-tale, song and the talk of every day. The Muria even have their theories about the physiological conditions necessary for conception. The first and most important of these is that the climax of the male and female should occur simultaneously. If the woman reaches her climax before the man's orgasm, his seed will be destroyed by her discharge. If the woman fails to reach a climax at all, conception will not occur. The Muria illustrate this by pointing out that if rice is sown in too much water, or if the rainfall is excessive, the seed will rot and there will be no harvest. If there is no rain after the seed is sown, it will wither. For a good crop there must be moderate showers.

883 842 Chelik and motiari then are well aware that conception normally follows sexual congress—'If you excrete in a stream, the mess will rise to the surface'; they are strictly warned that conception must not occur; at the same time they are given every opportunity, and indeed encouragement, to copulate. It is evident, therefore, that they must at least believe—in spite of a 4 per cent figure to the contrary—that conception can be avoided. What methods are adopted to achieve this end?

The first, and possibly to the Muria mind the most important, is a supernatural one. The ghotul is protected by Lingo Pen and the Earth Mother. It is a shrine, a *thirustân*, as the more Hinduized Muria call it. Within its walls no sin can be committed. No evil dream can harm the sleepers; no hostile magic can draw near. Conception cannot occur within the ghotul walls; a pregnancy is believed to be the result of furtive extramural activity.

For three years after the menarche, say the Muria, Lingo Pen saves the motiari from conceiving. There must be centuries of observation behind this faith in a sterility interval. Prayers and offerings are made to ensure the god's protection.

When a girl at her first menstruation goes to bathe in the stream, she prays to the Nahani Kanyang (Bathing Maiden) saying, 'So long as I live in the ghotul, see that my blood flows by the moon, and that I do not conceive. If you grant my desire I will make you an offering at my wedding'. If the prayer is granted, the girl offers an egg, some coconuts, ornaments, a little slag from the smithy, rice and an aonra ring to the Kanyang. I am told that the motiari have a great faith in this prayer, which they believe has prevented thousands of conceptions.

Sometimes the girl offers to the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden) the leaf-cup and plate from which she has eaten on the morning of the first day of her menarche, and prays, 'As you dance and play in the water, so let me dance and play. Let me not be pregnant till I am married, and on my wedding-day I will give you gifts'.

When a chelik and motiari fall in love with each other, especially if they belong to the type of ghotul that frowns upon such attachments and thus forces them to have congress outside its walls, they sometimes go to the jungle and, standing before a saja tree, offer an egg to Lingo Pen, saying, 'Protect us

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from scandal [that is, pregnancy]; if anyone's name is to be ruined, it will be yours and not ours'.[1]

A curious story comes from Aturbera. On the Tongar Mountain, the son of a Rau (hill-demon) died and that night there was a great wind and all the spirits wept. A chelik of the Uika clan heard the sound and its horror drove him mad. He went out onto the mountain-side and there in a high wind found the burning body of the Rau. He pulled the corpse from the flames and cut off its little finger. When he came to his senses he returned home, and put the Rau's finger in a hollow bamboo which he buried in front of the ghotul. Since then, it is said, no girl in that ghotul has ever become pregnant. At her menarche each motiari digs up the bamboo, removes a tiny scrap of the finger and offers it to the Rau saying, 'Let me not conceive'.

The chelik too are equally concerned to avoid the social and financial embarrassments of a conception for which they may be held responsible. At the Kokoko Festival, when the first patch of axe-cultivation is ceremonially fired, the Sirdar prays, 'Give us sound sleep with our motiari and let them not conceive'. This is how I heard them say it in Bandopal, and again a few days later I heard, at the same festival at Nayanar, the chelik pray, 'Give us daily congress with our motiari, sound sleep in the ghotul and let not the girls conceive'.

But the Muria do not rely entirely upon such supernatural contraceptives; they have faith also in physical means. They believe that the most favourable period for conception is immediately after the catamenial period; after the menstrual flow has stopped, a little blood remains in the vagina; this catches the seed and causes pregnancy. 'The woman's blood and water sucks at the man's water; she has been alone for days, now she is very excited; in this way conception occurs.'

Chelik and motiari must, therefore, avoid intercourse at this time. In most ghotul they are very strict about this. In some there is a rule that the girls should not come to sleep with the chelik till the sixth or seventh day. Even then it is the rule in Binjhli for boys to practise *coitus interruptus* on the seventh day, and a motiari is appointed to give the girls instructions to insist upon it. In other villages, although the girls may be allowed to return to the ghotul immediately after the close of the period, they are not permitted to sleep with the chelik, still less to have intercourse with them.

Another practical method of birth control is based on the belief that if a girl frequently changes her partners she is less likely to conceive. This idea, as we have seen, has led to far-reaching changes in the organization of the ghotul. The old rule of absolute fidelity to a single partner has been changed into one which forbids chelik and motiari to sleep together for more than three days at a time. A constant change of partners, it is believed, renders conception less likely.

Statistics, however, hardly bear this out. Of the 2000 married men examined, 720 had grown up in the *jodidār* ghotul and 1280 in ghotul where partners had to be changed. Of the 80 who made a girl pregnant during their ghotul period, only 25 were living in the *jodidār* ghotul, and 55 in the others, giving a figure of 1 pregnancy in 23·2 for the 'modern' ghotul and 1 in 28·8 for the *jodidār*, in exact contradiction of Muria tradition.

Members of the *jodidār* ghotul, however, say that they achieve some kind of limitation by 'spacing' their copulations. There is often a rule that the chelik

[1] On the other hand, a jealous girl or boy watching a beloved in the arms of another may offer a little rice and an egg to the Departed in the name of Lingo saying, 'Let so-and-so become pregnant, and be forced to face the scandal of a panchayat inquiry'.

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must not have intercourse with their 'wives' more than once or twice a week. They sleep together daily, but the ghotul leaders do not permit sexual congress; in such a close-knit society, control is not difficult. It is interesting that the natural sequence of a 'scandal' is the adoption of a rule that the motiari must not stay in the ghotul all night, or that they may only remain there before festivals and marriages, or on certain days of the week. This indicates the Muria belief that by breaking up the cycle of intercourse, conception is less likely to occur.

The Muria believe strongly that conception cannot follow an act of casual intercourse. A woman must remain with the same partner for at least a month, and during this time congress must be frequent.[1]

*Coitus interruptus* is known, but I have recorded it as practised in only two ghotul, Binjhli and Padde. I would not ordinarily pay much attention to the negative evidence in such a case, but in this matter inquiries have been made widely and with great care. There does not seem to be any reason why people who are prepared to discuss freely the most intimate sexual matters, even those that are taboo, should deny the method unless it really did not exist. In the majority of ghotul, it had not even been heard of, and a description of it was greeted with astonishment and even mirth. 'How should anyone withdraw at the very moment we want it to stay longer and go deeper?' asked a chelik at Kabonga, and at Markabera the comment was, 'After you have entered with so much trouble, how can you leave before your work is over?' Even at Binjhli the girls said that they disliked it and tried to prevent the boys' doing it except immediately after menstruation.[2]

Certain supposedly contraceptive herbs are taken orally. In Siuni the Muria Gaita prescribed as follows:

'Get an anagondri [the white garlic tied to the tall festal poles used by the Rawat at a Marhai bazaar]; let it dry; powder it and give it to a girl at her first menstruation in a little tobacco. This will keep her infertile for several years.'

Another remedy comes from Kuntpadar. The creeper called *keksa* is carefully watched until one is found which gives flowers but no fruit. The chelik goes to this 'barren creeper' on a Saturday and offers a little rice and *urad* pulse to it saying, 'I give you this: now come to help me'. The next day, early in the morning before cock-crow, he sacrifices a black chicken and coconut to the creeper. He sprinkles some of the blood over it and lets a little fall on the kernel of the coconut, a small bit of which he burns.

Now comes a delicate and difficult moment. He must uproot the creeper with a single jerk. If he is hesitant and fumbles with it, the root may turn into a snake and bite him. But if all is well, he takes the root home and waits until his girl's post-catamenial bath falls on a Sunday. On this day she must fast till evening when she is given a bit of the root mixed with the coconut and rice. After this, she will not conceive, just as the creeper, though it gave flowers (menstruation), bore no fruit. It is important, however, to

[1] The Gadaba of Orissa also believe that occasional intercourse in the dormitory cannot lead to conception; 'the field must be tilled for a long time before it can bear a crop'.

[2] It is curious that *coitus interruptus* is not practised more commonly by primitive people. The Baiga take the same attitude as the Muria: 'the sowing of the seed is the happiest moment in one's life—how should one resist it?—*The Baiga*, p. 221. But the Tikopia practise it freely.—R. Firth, *We, the Tikopia* (London, 1936), pp. 490f. It has also been recorded for the Thonga (Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol. I, p. 55), the Maori and generally in Africa (Himes, op. cit., pp. 5ff.). Himes quotes Margaret Mead for its existence among the Samoans (ibid., p. 23).

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see that the root of the creeper has no side-shoots, for these impair its efficacy.

Another orally administered drug is supposed to confer permanent sterilization.

'On a Sunday pick a few pieces of a parasite growing on a tilai tree. Dry them and heat in the fire till they can be powdered easily. Make into small pills with gur and give them to the woman—without her knowing—to eat with parched rice.' This is sometimes given by a chelik to his motiari. 'When there is great love between a boy and girl, he gives it to her so that they can love one another without danger.'

I do not know how commonly these remedies are used, but there is no doubt that chelik and motiari are expected to avoid conception somehow. A pregnancy is regarded as a gross piece of carelessness. There is a general belief that no one need conceive unless they want to, that a definite psychological factor is involved. If a boy and girl do not give themselves to one another with too oblivious a passion, if they hold back a little, if they are careful not to love too constantly or too long, conception need never follow. We have seen that too much love is not approved in the ghotul; conception is the punishment of an over-passionate attachment.

But when all precautions fail, and a girl finds herself pregnant, what happens? Directly she finds that 'the moon has come again, but the stream of blood is dry', she tells her chelik. There is no difficulty in the old type of ghotul; her ghotul-husband will look after her. In the newer type, where during the course of the month the girl may have been sleeping with a dozen different boys, she chooses either the one she likes best or the one with whom she first had congress after her last period. His immediate duty is to bring abortifacients.

Abortions are probably fairly common. In one village I was told that they mixed gur, ashes and the strongest mahua spirit available and gave it to the girl to drink. In another place the Muria said that they used gunpowder [1] mixed with mahua spirit. In Kokori, the Gaita recommended the obviously magical remedy of taking a bit of bark from a mahua tree which had been struck by lightning. This was burnt and the ashes mixed with liquor. In Berma, an eighty-year-old Muria recalled how when he was Nengi of the ghotul he made the Nirosa pregnant. He first dosed her with *keksa* root, but without success, apparently because he did not know the correct ritual of obtaining it, and then on a Monday he bought a bottle of *phuli* liquor. 'On that day we both fasted and in the evening, after bathing, I offered an egg and some liquor to Lingo Pen saying, "O Mahapurub Lingo, if you are a true god, let this girl abort; if you don't, the sin is yours and not mine. You founded the ghotul and if you truly live there till this day, show proof of it and I will offer you another egg". I then made the girl drink the rest of the liquor and in her drunkenness she aborted. As I had promised I gave the second egg to Lingo Pen.'

In one ghotul, about which I believe I have entirely authentic information, six of the girls had procured abortions; one had achieved it three times, twice in the third month and once in the fourth; another girl had achieved it twice. But the motiari do not like using abortifacients, for they believe that they lead to sterility later on, and this ghotul was probably exceptional. There

[1] Hinsa (op. cit., p. 8) quotes an unpublished report by W. B. Cline that 'it is the custom among the natives of the Oasis of Siwa in the Lybian Desert to drink infusions of gunpowder' as a contraceptive measure.

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Sometimes, indeed, the chelik actually try to make a girl pregnant. In Kanhargaon, two very popular motiari were betrothed to boys at Nayanar. The Kanhargaon chelik did all they could to make them pregnant so that they could force them into marriage and keep them in their own village. But they were unsuccessful, and in the end one of the girls was seduced by her own betrothed at a marriage, became pregnant and was hastily married to him. It is not uncommon, though I have no statistics on the point, for engaged couples whose parents unduly delay their marriage to force the issue either by eloping together or by trying to achieve a pregnancy.

But on the whole, the admirable ghotul rule that engaged couples should have nothing to do with one another before marriage is carefully observed. Out of 113 Lamhada boys serving for their wives and in close proximity for several years to the girls they were going to marry, only 5 made them pregnant.

Pre-nuptial pregnancy does not seem to injure the couple's relationships in marriage, provided a youth marries the girl himself. Of the 26 chelik who married the motiari they made pregnant, not one made a failure of his domestic life. At the time of my inquiries every one of them was living with his original partner and very happy with her. But those who had infertile sexual connexion with their wives before marriage showed a comparatively high divorce rate. Of the 316 who admitted to this, 14 had unsuccessful marriages. Of these 77 were the regular ghotul-wives of my informants and 68 of them were still living together when I inquired.

In only three cases during the last twenty years has a pregnancy been taken so seriously as to lead to tragedy. Two of these were the suicides which I have already described in Chapter XV. But here it was not so much the pregnancy itself as the fact that the pregnancy was the result of a connexion between chelik and motiari of the same clan that mattered. The third tragedy appears to have been due largely to a chelik's fear of the disgrace and expense, especially as it was his second experience of the kind.

At the beginning of April 1942, Birjhu, a chelik of the Aturbera ghotul, discovered with dismay that his motiari, Mori, was pregnant. Only a year before he had made another girl pregnant in the ghotul, had refused to marry her and had forced his parents to pay compensation. They did so, but they made many threats as to what they would do if it occurred again. Mori, who seems to have been in love with the boy, said that he must marry her, but Birjhu refused and said that if she told anybody that it was through him that she had conceived, he would kill her. After a little while, however, the poor girl told her brother's wife about it. When Birjhu heard she had done so, he planned to carry out his threat. On the night of the 14th of April, he told Mori he would do what she wanted and they had better elope together and get married in another village. Late at night they crept stealthily out of the ghotul and made their way through the forest. But suddenly, before they had gone very far, Birjhu caught hold of the girl and strangled her. Then he dragged her body below a tree and tied a rope round the neck to make it look as though the girl had committed suicide.

The following day a report was made at the Narayanpur police station that Mori had committed suicide. When Birjhu heard that the matter had gone to the police, he was frightened but possibly even more he was overwhelmed with sorrow and misery at what he had done. He disappeared, and two days later hanged himself from a tree in the jungle.

But this is the only incident of the kind that has yet been recorded.

Such is the general picture, familiar to students of pre-marital freedom everywhere. How are we to explain the fact that through all the years of

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eager youth and splendid physical vigour the chelik and motiari cohabit, employing few precautions worth the name, and yet achieve so low a pregnancy rate as 4 per cent? What explanations have been advanced to solve the problem in other cultures?

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Our first point must be to insist that there really is a problem. When chelik and motiari sleep together, do they really have sexual intercourse, or do they seek some other form of sexual gratification that does not involve the penetration of the male seed into the vagina? This question has been raised for the Bantu by Torday who believes that he has solved the problem of infertile pre-marital promiscuity by showing that it is not promiscuity at all.

> It is scarcely credible that Bantu parents and elders should be devoid of common sense to such an extent as to permit their children to have promiscuous intercourse and yet visit them with dire penalties when the natural consequence, pregnancy, follows. When this question has been fully investigated (an extremely delicate task) it will be found, no doubt, that what is generally described as free sexual intercourse between unmarried youngsters is nothing more than one form or another of mutual masturbation.[1]

African tradition undoubtedly favours some form of unconsummated sexual excitement. Laubscher has described the practice of *meisha* among the Tembu and Fingo peoples. This is performed by the boy facing the girl and placing his penis between her thighs, but penetration must be avoided and every three days the girls are examined to ensure that they remain virgins. Laubscher says that this early erotic form of hetero-sexual adaptation does not, at the pre-pubertal period, replace masturbation.[2] Leakey describes a somewhat similar practice of the Masai warriors in their *manyatta*-dormitories. Although a girl cannot refuse an invitation to sleep with the men, 'she is not necessarily expected to allow a man full sexual intercourse, and, in fact, often does not do so. Thus—strange as it may seem—Masai girls do sometimes go to their husbands as virgins in the physical sense of the word, although they have slept with men in the *manyattas* countless times.'[3] Similar sexual play without consummation is known as *ngwiko* by the Wakikuyu[4] and as *umba* by the Akikuyu. Driberg describes Lango intrigues with unmarried girls as 'platonic' in so far that, although a couple may spend a whole night together, they must not enjoy full sexual relations.[5]

Such practices must involve considerable strain, both physical and psychological, and it is notable that Leakey says that in the dormitory Masai girls 'usually have no objection to full intercourse' except on certain days. The Muria certainly seek to limit the amount of intercourse. Some ghotul send their girls to sleep at home or in a separate house; in these the boys sometimes practise masturbation after the girls have gone, but far more often have intercourse with them on their way home. As in the Masai dormitory, a girl is not bound to have intercourse with the boy she sleeps with on any particular day, but—unlike the Masai tradition—she cannot refuse to have intercourse with him at all. A few girls manage to avoid intercourse for several years, but they are not approved, and the very fact that they are discussed and criticized indicates their rarity. Chelik and motiari do, however,

[1] E. Torday, 'The Principles of Bantu Marriage', *Africa* (London, 1929), Vol. II, p. 256.
[2] H. J. F. Laubscher, *Sex, Custom and Psychopathology* (London, 1937), p. 72.
[3] L. S. B. Leakey, 'Some Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *JRAI*, Vol. LX, p. 194.
[4] C. Dundas, 'Native Laws of some Bantu Tribes', *JRAI*, Vol. LI, p. 246.
[5] J. H. Driberg, *The Lango* (London, 1923), p. 133.

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often sleep together without sexual congress. The girls have a practice, called *dinga-dinga*, of playing with the penis, and the great prominence given to the clitoris in drawings suggests that they indulge in some form of clitoridical stimulation. But full sexual intercourse is everywhere the rule, and is normal through all divergences and for every type of ghotul.

How far does infanticide and abortion solve the problem? Hutton suggests this for the Angami Naga.

> The licence allowed to unmarried girls raises another question. What of their children? Here accurate information is exceedingly difficult to obtain. Illegitimate children are very rare, and Mr Davis remarks that 'it is impossible to resist the conclusion that they are made away with immediately after birth, or that abortion is procured before the birth of the child'.[1]

Yet few cases come to the courts, and even Hutton with his great experience was unable to find examples. For the Muria I have described an attempt at abortion as a routine measure in cases of ghotul pregnancy, but its ineffectiveness is shown not only by definite statements to that effect, but also by the number of children actually born. Infanticide is, I am certain, unknown.

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The Muria themselves, as we have seen, place considerable reliance on a frequent change of partners. Pitt-Rivers suggested that promiscuity sterilizes by mixing the sperms of different males.[2] Westermarck considered that promiscuity resulted in a pathological condition of the vagina that resulted in barrenness.[3] But the theory of a spermotoxin has not been endorsed by any responsible scientist, and is not supported by the Muria statistics, for there are more pregnancies in the ghotul where partners are frequently changed than in those where each motiari remains faithful to a single partner.

Not altogether unsound is the Muria belief that contraception is secured by spacing acts of congress and that pregnancy cannot follow single or casual coitus. 'Conception often in the writings of novelists', says Zuckerman, 'results from an isolated sexual act, but in real life this is probably exceptional',[4] and he quotes Meaker as saying that:

> Undoubtedly there are human matings in which a single act of coitus, or at most coitus repeated at intervals throughout one menstrual month, would infallibly produce conception, but these are exceptions. Most couples who succeed in reproducing do so in spite of certain imperfections in the conceptive mechanism . . . most people are relatively and not absolutely fertile.[5]

The Muria belief has naturally arisen from an observation of what actually happens. A girl who remains infertile in the ghotul quickly conceives after marriage. 'A motiari', said a chelik at Bhanpuri, 'is an unenclosed clearing; a wife is fenced and irrigated land. As you care for it, it soon bears a harvest, and becomes more and more easy to plough.' And the Jholer of Moroskoro said, 'We had a child within a year of our marriage, for we loved each other and had congress without fear'.

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This belief seems to be common in the Pacific. Of the Melanesians of British New Guinea, Seligman says,

1 J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 171.
2 G. H. L. Pitt-Rivers, *The Clash of Cultures* (London, 1927), p. 148.
3 E. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, Vol. I, p. 334.
4 S. Zuckerman, 'The Physiology of Fertility in Man and Monkey', *The Eugenics Review*, Vol. XXVIII (1936), p. 48.
5 S. R. Meaker, *Human Sterility* (London, 1934), p. 41.

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> I believe that . . . Papuasian girls are less easily impregnated than the women of the white race. Whether this is in any degree due to early coitus, early and strenuous work in the gardens, or is a racial peculiarity I do not venture to surmise, but the point of view taken becomes perhaps more comprehensible when it is remembered that the Sinaugolo hold that a single act of coitus is insufficient to produce conception, so that a Sinaugolo girl does not expect to have a child unless visited fairly regularly for a comparatively lengthy time, perhaps not less than a month.[1]

The Tikopia also believe that,

> A child cannot be conceived by a single act of impregnation, but only by a repeated series of acts. This is in line with the view that the child is formed by the coagulation of semen, hence several deposits at close intervals are necessary. The habit of young people of copulating once then missing some days before the next time of intercourse is a corollary of this.[2]

The Muria belief in a safe, or rather unsafe, period is widely shared by other communities. Ancient Indian tradition regarded the *ritu*, or the period extending from the fourth to the twelfth day after the beginning of the menses, as particularly favourable to conception. A husband must approach his wife at this time; if he does not he will suffer the pains of hell.[3] The same belief is universally distributed in modern India, with an emphasis on the first or the first two days after the close of the period. Many aboriginal tribes insist on their women behaving with special restraint and care on these days.

Hollis reports that the Nandi girls are careful not to visit the huts of the warriors for some days after their period 'for fear of becoming pregnant after intercourse with the men'.[4] Himes quotes a report on the Isleta Indians of New Mexico that 'if a woman does not wish to conceive she will not have intercourse for nine days after menstruation'.[5] The great gynaecologist Soranos warned his readers to abstain from coitus directly before and after menstruation.[6] Aetios of Amida, a Greek physician of the sixth century, gave the same advice.[7]

The Muria belief that conception is a girl's own fault and that it can be avoided by the proper psychological attitude during coitus—'Let her not want it, let her not give herself, let her be quiet and not respond—and there will be no danger'—resembles the ancient Chinese practice known as Kong-fou, a sort of self-hypnosis by which the thoughts during intercourse were directed elsewhere. Kisch quotes Riedel as authority for a statement that the women of the island of Buru often had intercourse with strange men, 'but maintained a passive and indifferent state, for the purpose of avoiding conception', and adds that 'it is well known' that

> An active participation on the part of the woman in the sexual act, by increasing her voluptuous sensations, gives rise to certain reflex actions—descent of the uterus, rounding of the os uteri, induration of the portio vaginalis, and, finally, ejaculation of the secretion of the cervical

[1] Seligman, op. cit., p. 500.
[2] J. J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (London, 1930), Vol. I, pp. 215ff., where references to the classical texts are given.
[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 82.
[4] Himes, op. cit., p. 23, quoting R. C. Parsons in *47th Ann. Rep. B.A.E.*, p. 213.
[5] Ibid., p. 90.
[6] Firth, op. cit., p. 492.
[7] Ibid., p. 94.

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glands and of the glands of Bartholin; these changes accelerate the entrance of the semen into the cavity of the uterus, and increase the motility of the spermatozoa.[1]

But Kisch considers that sufficient dependence cannot be placed on this belief that the uterine reflexes are under the conscious will. Himes thinks that the idea simply 'proceeds from a sense of guilt in coitus; if it is not enjoyed, the consequences will not be so unfortunate'.[2] This might well apply to European women, but it is rare to find this sense of guilt among the Muria, though once a cheik at Moroskoro admitted that when, after marriage, he copulated without fear of the consequences his wife quickly became pregnant.

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We may note finally that the Muria are not exceptionally fertile. Out of the 2000 marriages examined, 150 were infertile, though some of these may have been fruitful later. Of these 150, only 1 husband had previously caused a ghotul pregnancy, and his subsequent sterility was regarded by his wife (who was probably the real person at fault) as a punishment. This infertility may be due to dietary factors; but it is interesting that the inflammatory diseases, such as mumps and epididymitis, which usually cause sterility in the male, are practically unknown among the Muria.

All these different factors have probably contributed to the low conception- and birth-rate in the Muria ghotul. A certain number of abortions are procured by not very efficient means; *coitus interruptus* is occasionally practised; certain disciplines and restraints undoubtedly play their part. But the Muria have no form of contraception, that is sufficiently widely practised, that can account for only 80 pregnancies caused by 2000 males copulating at least twice a week (to give the lowest figure for the most disciplined ghotul) for the period between the ages of 12 and 17.

The most satisfactory general explanation is to be found in the theory, usually associated with the name of Hartman, of a period of adolescent sterility. This explanation was first promulgated by Crew in his Presidential Address on 'Puberty and Maturity' before the Second International Congress for Sex Research held in London in 1930. From experiments conducted on 100 female mice at the first oestrous Crew found that while 20 refused to mate, only 24 of the 80 who did mate became pregnant. But three or six months later, the fertility rate rose to 80 or 90 per cent. 'It is seen, therefore', says Crew, 'that though pregnancy can occur at the time of the first oestrous, it is relatively uncommon.'[3] The following year Hartman developed this theory as a result of his observations on the sex life of rhesus monkeys, and in a number of important publications[4] has since established the fact that there is not only a 'very high incidence of non-ovulatory cycles in young mammals but that human beings also have an infecund period for some years after the menarche'. Ashley-Montagne has given an admirably lucid summary of this and subsequent literature on the subject. 'It has long been known', he points out, 'that puberty is by no means coincident with the development of the reproductive powers, that in the girl menstruation may long precede the

[1] R. H. Kisch, *The Sexual Life of Woman*, Eng. trans. by M. H. Paul (New York, 1926), p. 403.

[2] Himes, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[3] F. A. E. Crew, 'Puberty and Maturity' in *Proceedings of the Second International Congress for Sex Research* (London, 1930), p. 9.

[4] C. G. Hartman, 'On the Relative Sterility of the Adolescent Organism', *Science*, Vol. LXXIV (1931), pp. 226-7; *Contributions to Embryology*, No. 134 (Washington, 1932), pp. 1-164; *Time of Ovulation in Women* (Baltimore and London, 1936); *Sex and Internal Secretions* (Baltimore, 1932).

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more important function of ovulation, and that in the youth ejaculation may long precede the process of spermatogenesis.' The experiments of Mills and Ogle on mice, and of Yerkes and others on the chimpanzee have confirmed this belief. Ashley-Montague quotes investigations made by Mondiere on the women of Cochin China, by Maxwell on Chinese women from South Fukien, by Mills and Ogle on white and negro mothers of illegitimate children, and by Chau and Wright on a very large number of Chinese women living in sub-tropical Canton.[1] Among the latter, the mean age at menarche was 14·5 years, the mean age at marriage 17·6 years and the mean age at the birth of the first child 20·5 years—which suggests a sterility interval of 6 years.

> It seems probable that in the human female, and in the mammals, which have thus far been studied, there is generally an interval of anything up to five years or more between menarche and the ability to procreate, during which the female is functionally sterile and unable to reproduce. This sterile interval has been shown by Hartman to be due, in the monkey at least, to the non-ovulatory character of the adolescent menstrual cycle. And as Hartman has pointed out, puberty, which is signalized by the onset of the first menstruation, merely marks 'the early manifestation of a train of events (adolescence) which only after three or four years on the average lead to ovulation and conception, the proof of maturity'. It is such facts as these, as Hartman has also suggested, which may possibly explain the infertility of the unmarried women in primitive societies.[2]

Zuckerman, in an article wherein he prophesied that both puberty and the menopause will one day become controllable events, has adopted and discussed the theory.

> Only the first phase of the full ovulation cycle is experienced for a long period after the process of reproductive maturation (puberty) sets in both in man and monkeys. The anterior lobe of pituitary presumably undergoes waves of activity during which it elaborates only a follicular-maturation hormone, or only enough of a general gonadotropic hormone, to cause development of the ovarian follicles. The hormone produced by the developing follicles causes growth of the uterine mucosa, and when the wave of pituitary activity comes to an end, the wave of follicular growth it stimulated also ceases, so that the uterus no longer comes under the influence of the follicular hormone. As a result, a retrogressive uterine phase sets in and menstruation occurs. The first menstrual cycles after puberty probably always follow this course, i.e. the first menstrual cycles experienced by women are usually unaccompanied by ovulation.
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> Hence it was that the Trobriand Islanders studied by Malinowski never conceived in their early youth in spite of unrestricted sexual

[1] M. F. Ashley-Montague, *Coming into Being among the Australian Aborigines* (London, 1937), pp. 236ff., and 'Adolescent Sterility' in *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. XIV (1939), pp. 13–34, 192–219. Dr Ashley-Montague was good enough to communicate his conclusions to me from America during the war, and I am greatly indebted to him for the light he has thrown on a problem which, to everyone who lives in the aboriginal world, is of great interest and importance.

[2] R. T. Mondiere, 'Sur la Menographie de la Femme de la Cochinchine', *Bull. de la Soc. d'Anthrop.*, T.3, Ser. 3 (1880), pp. 250–61; C. A. Mills and C. Ogle, 'Physiologic Sterility of Adolescence', *Human Biology*, Vol. VIII (1936), pp. 607–15; K. T. Chau and J. M. Wright, 'Gynaecological Notes: Canton Hospital', *China Medical Journal*, 1923, pp. 664–7.

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licence. Hence, too, births rarely occur before the third year of effective marital relationship in Indian 'child marriages'.[1]

Let us now turn to a consideration of the Muria statistics. I give below a table showing the number of births of a first child at varying ages. It may be said with a good deal of confidence that effective marriage never or rarely begins before a year after the menarche, and in many cases not for two or three years.[2] It never occurs in the pre-pubertal period.

Table I, then, gives the number of births for each period of months or years after effective marriage. The total number of cases examined was 2000, of which 150 were infertile.

TABLE I

| Length of time after effective marriage | Number of births |
|---|---|
| Within a month .. .. .. | 1 |
| After 2 months .. .. .. | 2 |
| 3 months .. .. .. | 6 |
| 4 months .. .. .. | 3 |
| 5 months .. .. .. | 1 |
| 6 months .. .. .. | 17 |
| 7 months .. .. .. | 10 |
| 8 months .. .. .. | 4 |
| 9 months .. .. .. | 3 |
| 1 year .. .. .. | 187 |
| 1 year and a half .. .. | 50 |
| 2 years .. .. .. | 463 |
| 2½ years .. .. .. | 93 |
| 3 years .. .. .. | 603 |
| 4 years .. .. .. | 180 |
| 5 years .. .. .. | 116 |
| Uncertain .. .. .. | 112 |

I have some confidence in the accuracy of these figures because the length of time before a child is born is a matter of the greatest interest to both wife and husband. It is probably one of the few things in Muria life about which accurate calculations are made.

I have less confidence in my other tables, but I give them because they are interesting and suggestive. They represent the result of an inquiry in which men belonging to 220 different ghotul were consulted about the conception-problem during their own chelik periods. Each man may be assumed to have spent at least 5 years in the ghotul. Few of them showed any reluctance to talk about the affairs of their youth: the statements of those who did were

[1] A. Zuckerman, 'The Physiology of Fertility in Man and Monkey', *The Eugenics Review*, Vol. XXVIII (1936), p. 39.

[2] The average age of menarche in the Indian girl has been given as 14·21 ± 1·66 years.—Cuyjol, 'The Reproductive Life of Indian Women', *The Indian Journal of Medical Research*, Vol. VIII (1920), pp. 396ff.

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checked by separate inquiries from other members of the same ghotul. In the 220 ghotul there were histories of 327 pregnancies. The Muria were consulted about the ages of the girls who became pregnant, and the number of years which had passed in each case between menarche and pregnancy. Muria calculations are obviously rough and ready, but it is hard to see how we can get more accurate figures for a primitive society. I give them for what they are worth.

TABLE II

| Ages of girls at first pre-marital pregnancy in 327 cases | |
|---|---|
| 15 | 1 |
| 16 | 26 |
| 17 | 49 |
| 18 | 68 |
| 19 | 63 |
| 20 | 46 |
| 21 | 25 |
| 22 | 18 |
| 23 | 23 |
| 24 | 8 |

TABLE III

| Number of years between menarche and pregnancy in the above 327 cases | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 61 |
| 3 | 99 |
| 4 | 82 |
| 5 | 30 |
| 6 | 28 |
| 7 | 3 |
| Uncertain | 22 |

Even though these figures cannot be regarded with the confidence one would give to laboratory material, they are strikingly suggestive of the sterility interval. Table I, which refers to the post-marital period, is confirmed by the two other Tables which describe pre-marital conceptions.

I have little doubt that here we have the real solution of our problem.